



Staff Report

HIGH SPEED RAIL (HSR) PROJECT UPDATE AND CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION SUPPORTING CUT/COVER ALIGNMENT ALTERNATIVE

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Summary

Staff is providing updates on a number of topics associated with the High Speed Rail (HSR) project for Belmont. These include:

- Continued consideration of a Resolution Supporting Inclusion of a Cut and Cover Trench Alignment Alternative for the HSR segment within Belmont – see Attachment A
- Status/next steps on formulation of the Ad-Hoc HSR Subcommittee
- Review of HSR Construction Right-of-Way Maps for the Belmont Segment

Background/Discussion

Draft Resolution – Cut & Cover Trench Alignment Alternative

As previously discussed at the August 24, 2010 City Council meeting, staff presented a draft Resolution for Council consideration focusing support for a Cut and Cover Trench Alignment for the HSR Segment in Belmont. Council consensus was not reached on the content/tone of the Resolution. Additionally, the Council believed it more appropriate to fully discuss and act on the Resolution when the entire Council would be present; thus the matter was continued to tonight's meeting. Staff has made modifications to 8/24/10 version and is seeking continued Council discussion and direction on this Draft – See Attachment A.

Ad-Hoc HSR Subcommittee Update

As discussed at the July 27th & August 24th 2010 regular City Council meetings, the Council approved formation of a special ad-hoc committee to address High Speed Rail (HSR) issues. Since that time, the three Commissions (Finance, Parks & Recreation, and Planning) have met and representatives have been appointed.

Staff continues to proceed with efforts to elicit applications for HSR Ad-Hoc Committee membership from Belmont residents and business owners. Two outreach events at City Hall (EOC Room) have been calendared for Wednesday September 22nd – 6PM, and Thursday

September 23rd – 10AM to educate the business community on HSR issues and solicit volunteers for the Ad-Hoc Committee. Post-card announcements were mailed to Belmont business owners/tenants on 9/9 in advance of the meeting.

Community members wishing to apply for Ad-Hoc Committee membership will be instructed to complete a City Committee application form and submit it to the City Clerk no later than October 1, 2010.

Staff has identified the specific goal of forming and convening this committee prior to the release of the High Speed Rail Environmental Impact Study, expected in December 2010.

HSR Construction Right-of-Way Maps for the Belmont Segment

As discussed in previous City Council meetings, there is an interest in preparation and viewing of aerial maps which illustrate the existing CalTrain Right-of-Way and the associated HSR construction area. The four track aerial viaduct structure proposed for the Belmont corridor is expected to be approximately 80 feet wide; the structure would be wider (40-50 ft. additional – 120-130 ft. total) at the Belmont Station area to accommodate for outboard passenger ingress/egress (stairs, platform, elevators). There is also a temporary construction easement need which will vary from approximately 5 to 20 feet on either side of the finished track structure.

To allow for visualization of the existing conditions, right-of-way area, and adjacent properties, staff has prepared aerial maps (with legend and scale information) which will be mounted and displayed for viewing at tonight's meeting. Previous draft photo-simulations/3D Modeling illustrating an aerial structure within the Belmont Corridor will also be on display. These aerial maps (illustrating HSR construction & Right-of-Way need) will continue to be refined based upon updated information from the Rail Authority.

General Plan/Vision Statement

Review of this matter furthers the City's Vision Statement(s) as follows:

Distinctive Community Character

- *We get involved in town matters because we care about living here.*
- *Our strong sense of community and enjoyment of the town's assets and activities deepen as we become better informed and connected.*

Fiscal Impact

As noted in previous updates, an on-going effort will be required to review and assess HSR documents, studies and issues, facilitate Ad-Hoc Committee activities and to provide community outreach and education on the project. As of this time, activities associated with HSR work products, staff reports, meetings, and research have not yet involved the use of third party (i.e. consultant) services. A preliminary tabulation of staff HSR resources/efforts (since February 2010) for the Community Development, Information Services, and Public Works Departments is approximately 290 hours. Staff will continue to monitor and provide hours/resources accounting for Council review, as necessary.

Public Contact

Posting of City Council agenda.

Recommendation

This report provides informational updates on the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee, Review of HSR Construction Right-of-Way Maps, and Fiscal Impacts/Resources for the project. Staff also requests specific direction on the content/merits and/or adoption of the proposed Cut and Cover Trench Alignment Resolution.

Alternatives

1. Provide direction on a modified Resolution.
2. Direct staff to return with additional information.
3. Continue the review of this matter.
4. Take no action.

Attachments

A. Draft Resolution – Cut and Cover Trench Alignment Alternative

Respectfully submitted,

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City Manager

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ATTACHMENT A

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELMONT SUPPORTING A TUNNELING OR FULLY TRENCHED AND PARTIALLY COVERED CONSTRUCTION ALTERNATIVE FOR SHARED HIGH SPEED RAIL ON THE CALTRAIN RIGHT-OF-WAY

WHEREAS, with the passage of Proposition 1A in November 2008 California voters provided a \$9.95 billion bond funding for construction of high-speed rail between major metropolitan areas of California; and,

WHEREAS, the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) proposes to route this high speed rail through the peninsula on the shared right-of-way with Caltrain; and,

WHEREAS, the City and residents of Belmont maintain unequivocal support of Caltrain in its mission to provide local commuter service and improve mass transit connectivity for peninsula communities; and,

WHEREAS, Caltrain is cutting service while at the same time experiencing financial/budgetary difficulties and we need a working local transit system before we can support spending our tax dollars on a California High Speed Rail system; and,

WHEREAS, the CHSRA committed to an open dialogue with the peninsula cities, following the Contest Sensitive Solutions model with the stated goal to "*Ensure that community input is heard and considered during project planning and design*" and the stated guiding principle to "*Exercise flexibility and creativity to shape effective transportation solutions, while preserving and enhancing community and natural environments.*" (CHSRA Preliminary AA, April 2010); and,

WHEREAS, on August 5, 2010, the CHSRA announced the elimination of all alternatives for Belmont except an elevated aerial skyway or berm structure, without further evaluation of other alternatives, without completion of mandatory environmental impact study, and without measurement of the true and total economic impact upon cities and residents; and,

WHEREAS, the CHSRA is financially supporting tunneling in San Francisco and San Jose; and;

WHEREAS, this aerial/berm structure, accommodating four tracks, would be a minimum of 80 feet wide, 30 feet high, with additional 25 foot high electric catenaries above the rail track line, thus creating the visual equivalent of a five-story building running the north-south length of Belmont; and,

WHEREAS, in its July 29, 2010 Alternatives Analysis Comment Letter, Belmont enumerated guiding principles that would measure the appropriateness of any design model, to which none of the proposed construction alternatives conform because they would:

- Have the effect of dividing our Downtown by creating a visual and physical barrier between east and west.
- Detract from the ambience and usability of three parks, three public plazas, and two youth sports fields due to noise, vibration, reduced solar access, pollution and visual blight.
- Reduce the usability and marketability of property abutting the right-of-way due to increased noise, vibration, pollution, loss of privacy, reduced solar access and visual blight.
- Diminish property values of both commercial and residential properties along the right-of-way, as well as on nearby hillside areas due to increased noise, pollution, and vibration, loss of privacy, reduced solar access, and visual blight.
- Reduce the quality of life for hundreds of senior, disabled, or low income residents living within 100 feet of the right-of-way.
- Expose our children at two elementary schools within 100 and 400 yards of the Right-of-Way to increased noise, pollution, and vibration at their schools.
- Significantly increase the level of background noise in nearby residential and community spaces; and,

WHEREAS, such destruction of community environments and adverse impact upon vulnerable population groups contradicts CHSRA's stated goal and guiding principle.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Belmont does not support development of High Speed Rail on the existing Caltrain right-of-way as all construction alternatives pose significant and immitigable economic and environmental impacts, and threaten the livability and economic survival of the city; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in evaluation of all feasible High Speed Rail construction alternatives along Belmont's 1.6 mile segment of the Caltrain corridor, the options which result in the least impact to the community's quality of life, visual aesthetic, and economic vitality is the tunneling or covered trench options paid for by the CSHRA, with no cost to Belmont and with full reimbursement for economic hardship that construction will cause; these are the only options that the City of Belmont can support; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Belmont strongly encourages other peninsula cities to join in unified support and acceptance of the tunneled or fully covered trench high speed rail construction alternatives, with said reimbursement by the CHSRA for economic hardship, such that the completed peninsula rail corridor will comprise a homogeneous profile, and that all peninsula cities will share in an equitable outcome, and preserve the livability and economic viability of their communities.

* * * * *

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly passed and adopted by the City Council of the City of Belmont at a regular meeting thereof held on September 14, 2010, by the following vote:

AYES, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

NOES, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

ABSTAIN, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

ABSENT, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

CLERK of the City of Belmont

APPROVED:

MAYOR of the City of Belmont